



Jesus
in the
ROSARY

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By FATHER MONSABRÉ, O.P.



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JESUS IN THE ROSARY

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

I.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN— THE INCARNATE WORD.

And the Angel Gabriel was sent from God, into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in said unto her: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.'

St. Luke i., 26, 27, 28.

GOD IS ABOUT to descend from heaven and to clothe Himself with our poor and fragile human nature in the womb of a virgin; this is the mystery that the Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary (Luke i.). It is an incomprehensible and ineffable mystery, expected for four thousand years and prepared from all eternity. Let us contemplate this preparation even in the bosom of God Himself.

Before the birth of ages God saw all that was to be. The work conceived by Him unfolded itself before His eyes with all its wonders, with all its mighty revolutions. He saw sin enter into His work, and He decreed that sin should be punished. But the Word intervened and proposed to His

Father to receive in His own adorable person the strokes of divine justice. Sin will be expiated by a Victim equal to the Majesty it offends; it will be pardoned. To effect the reconciliation of mercy and justice, the Word, a member of the divine family, must become a member of the family of sinners and permeate with His infinite merits the guilty nature He would save. To this effect an unspotted and sanctified humanity, which God will wound and put to death on account of our iniquities, will be formed in the virginal womb of a daughter of Adam by the mysterious and chaste operation of the Holy Ghost. Such is the admirable and merciful design of the Holy Trinity. Let us adore it in the depths of our hearts.

The hour of its accomplishment has struck. Mary has pronounced the *fiat* (let it be done) of a new creation more glorious than that of the world; and 'the Word was made flesh.' The Word, the true Son of God, eternally begotten of Him, equal to His Father in all things, the resplendent mirror and living image of His original principle, the personal splendour of the divine substance—this is the Word made flesh. Flesh ! did I say ? Yes; He has passed by the angels and has not noticed their pure and holy natures, and He has espoused our soul with its weak and corruptible companion. He takes the world at its worst, in

order to associate all creatures to His divinity; He descends to the lowest depths, for it is not the immortal and impassible flesh of innocence and justice He assumes, but the miserable flesh of sinners. If His sanctity shrinks from contracting the stain of sin, His merciful condescension assumes its entire responsibility. Thus, in the eyes of His Father, He becomes sin itself: 'Him, who knew no sin, He hath *made sin* for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him', (2 Cor. v. 21). How well it is expressed by the great Apostle of the Gentiles: 'He has annihilated Himself' (Philip. ii.).

In this annihilation all is pure goodness; we have done nothing to deserve it. The rare desires of holy souls were washed away in torrents of iniquity. After waiting long, the world, in decay and in rottenness, appeared more deserving of destruction than at its beginning; but the errors and crimes of man had not exhausted the indefatigable love of Him who *annihilated Himself*.

In presence of this great mystery the sentiments of our soul should be those of profound astonishment, of loving and grateful admiration. The principle of our greatness is to be found in this abasement of the Divinity. Having adored the Son of God annihilated, let us consider what we are by the Incarnation: Brothers of God! Nothing is

more certain than this great honour; for the Word incarnate, whom Mary calls Jesus, is clothed in our veritable human nature and carries in His sacred veins blood drawn from the same source whence ours has descended. Whilst we give to Him, by the flesh, our earthly father, He gives to us, by the hypostatic union, His Heavenly Father. Children of wrath, we are made in Him children of benediction; condemned to a double death, we receive from Him resurrection and life; proscribed by the malediction pronounced in the beginning of the world, we are called by Him to the inheritance of glory and beatitude promised also at the moment of our creation. Our debased soul is raised to honour; our flesh, humbled by suffering, aspires to immortality. With Jesus, and through Him, and in Him our thoughts, desires, and actions are purified, transformed, and raised to heaven. The aspiration of our nature, a prey, from the day of its origin, to the mysterious longing for the infinite, is at length satiated; now we are indeed divine beings. Oh! what honour, and, in consequence, what respect we owe ourselves! 'O man!' says St. Leo, 'recognize your dignity; and having become a participant in the divine nature by the incarnate Word, never lower yourself by returning to the meanness of your former life.'

II.

*THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN THE
FIRST GIFT OF JESUS.*

And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb for joy. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she cried out with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'
St. Luke i., 39, 40, 41, 42.

THERE IS COMMOTION in a humble home at Nazareth. They who live in it seem agitated, hurried; they are preparing for a journey. What is its purpose? Is Mary, till then so humble and discreet, now hastening to publish the wonders performed under her roof and in her womb? No; filled with the Holy Spirit, she carefully guards the secret of the King of Kings. But an interior voice says to her: Go. It is Jesus who wishes to justify His Name of Saviour without delay, to begin His mission of redemption, to destroy in souls the empire of sin, and to show Himself beneficent and merciful. One day the Apostle St. Peter will say of Him: 'He went about doing good' (Acts x. 38). Even before He was born He merited this testimony. Hidden from human view, silent and imprisoned, He goes to manifest Himself and to give expression to His omnipotent goodness by visiting His Precursor.

Why does He not call the Precursor to Him? Is it not the duty of the servant to go to his master, of the sick man to seek his physician, of the poor man to go to the rich whose alms he begs? But love reverses all these rules; the King of Kings, the heavenly Physician, the Author of grace anticipates the advances of His creatures. Not yet in a condition to move of Himself, He wishes to be carried. 'Behold,' says St. Ambrose, 'the inferior has need of succour, and his superior goes to his aid—Mary goes to Elizabeth, Christ to John. The wonderful meeting of the mothers is the signal for divine benefits. Elizabeth hears the voice of Mary; John is touched by the grace of his Redeemer.' At the same instant the severe laws of nature, which confine the infant in a mysterious repose, yield to the pressure of the Author of nature. 'Before he is born John speaks by his motions of joy. Before entering into the world he announces his God; before seeing the light he points out the Eternal Sun. Still a prisoner in his mother's womb, he nevertheless performs the office of precursor, and says to all: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world".' These are the words of St. John Chrysostom.

Let us admire the full and sudden correspondence of the Precursor with the grace

which purifies him from sin, illumines his soul, and calls him to the service of God. Let us consider the mystery of the Visitation is a type of the sweet anticipations of the divine bounty in our own regard, and of the line of conduct we should follow when we are visited by God's grace.

After the days, too quickly passed, which our Lord spent on earth, in which men could see and feel and touch Him, in which they could contemplate His charms, hear His words, admire His works, condole with Him in His sufferings, and receive His promises, He is again hidden from human view in a manner even more profound than in His Mother's womb. Hidden indeed He is, but He has not withdrawn Himself to an inaccessible distance. 'His delight is to be with the children of men.' He is with us in our tabernacles, more imprisoned, more immovable than He was as an infant in the living sanctuary in which He first learned to live.

Thither He calls to Him His priests, and commands them to carry Him with reverential hands to visit our souls and fill them with His presence. What do I say? He stands night and day at the door of our hearts, knocking and demanding an entrance. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' (Apoc. iii.). Every grace that we receive, every advance He makes to us, every light,

every good counsel, encouragement, or impulse towards good, is a visit of Jesus.

O dearly-beloved Saviour! How do we respond to so much honour and to so many benefits? Our souls, in order to become the abode of their Spouse in His sacramental visits, ought to deck themselves out in the most tender and perfect virtues. Like docile harps they ought to resound and thrill with joy at the touch of the Saviour's hand in the same manner as the unborn Precursor leaped for joy in His presence. But alas ! we meet Him more frequently with coldness, indifference, hesitation, and even a refusal to accept His heavenly visits. Oh, how shameful !

Thou seest us, O Lord ! penetrated with confusion and remorse at the thought of Thy many visits we have lost. Grant that they may not be lost again! Strengthen our faith, that we may be able at all times to adore Thy holy presence under the veil by which Thou concealest Thyself from our eyes. Make our souls delicately sensitive to the touch of Thy grace. Let every good impression received be at once transformed into a virtue. Let the prompt and abundant growth of Thy gifts draw from those who will see our spiritual transformation the words of the Psalmist: 'Thou has visited the earth and hast plentifully watered it; Thou hast many ways enriched it' (Psalm lxiv.).

III.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD—THE INFANT JESUS.

And it came to pass that when they were in Bethlehem her days were accomplished, and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds keeping the night-watches over their flocks. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone around about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them: 'Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a SAVIOUR, who is Christ, the Lord.' And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.' St. Luke ii., 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14.

THE HEAVENS RESOUND with a joyous and sublime canticle: 'Glory to God in the highest heavens, and peace on earth to men of good-will.' Angels bear the glad tidings to the world: 'This day is born to you a Saviour.' O heavenly spirits! Tell us where shall we find this Saviour so ardently desired, so long expected? In Bethlehem, the city of David. In Bethlehem! A small city indeed for so great a King! But surely some ancient, stately palace, the last relic of the fallen fortunes of those who once ruled in Juda, has been fitted up to receive the Son of God. Ah! no. His poverty finds no place for Him even in the public inns of the old city. The owners of human habitations refuse to receive Him; and His Mother, quite desolate, sees herself forced to share with animals a corner of their stable. 'And

this shall be a sign to you,' continue the angels: 'you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.'

What a change, great God, in Thy manifestations ! Formerly, when Thou didst appear to our fathers of the old law, it was always under striking, and even terrible, figures; and often those who had been honoured by Thy manifestation were heard to cry out: 'We have seen the Lord; we shall die the death.' Now Thou presentest Thyself to us in the form of an infant.

An infant attracts us by its charms and touches our hearts by its helplessness. Its weak cries, its sweet smile, its peaceful rest soften the heart. What is more amiable than an infant? And behold, my Saviour is one! He does not resemble the children of some royal house around whom servants and courtiers gather in crowds. A cradle gilt with gold, a sumptuous service, would repel the lowly and the poor; and Jesus came that all should approach Him with confidence and love. This is why He shows Himself to us 'wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.'

But at this crib how many precious lessons are imparted to me !

The infant Jesus teaches me to trample under foot the vain honours which human pride pursues with frantic eagerness.

The infant Jesus teaches me to despise the false and fleeting goods which my covetous heart rushes after.

The infant Jesus teaches me that privations and sufferings are intended to tame and reduce to obedience my rebellious flesh, the enemy of all virtue and of my perfection.

The infant Jesus calls me to a state of simplicity and candour, to an obscure, solitary, and hidden life.

With deepest reverence I receive these lessons in my heart, for it is love that gives them to me.

Love ! Behold what moves me most to-day. The imperial edict which tore the Holy Family from the sweets of the domestic fireside, the blindness of men who refused an asylum to the Son of God hidden in the womb of His Mother, the cold December night of His nativity, the stable of Bethlehem, the swaddling clothes, the crib—all this was prepared in His eternal councils by the love of my God.

The Splendour of eternal light, the Infant Jesus, clothes Himself with our poor flesh. It is for love of me. My impure eyes could never have borne the brightness of His glory; and yet I had need of coming near my God, of seeing Him, of hearing Him, of touching and embracing Him. After the anxious waiting of humanity we had need

of being delighted in the light of His sensible presence.

Master of all the goods of the world, the Infant Jesus condemns Himself to poverty. It is for love of me. My heart, so easily charmed with earthly things, had to learn that they are too small and too mean for my love, and that those who have the smallest portion of them are to possess, like their Saviour, the fullest measure of spiritual goods.

Eternally and perfectly happy, the infant Jesus began to suffer at the moment of His birth into the world. It is for love of me. I will be less inclined to rebel against the hard necessity of suffering when I see my Saviour submit to it from the first moment of His mortal life.

Who will not return the love of Him who has loved so much ?

Would that I possessed the most pure heart of Thy Mother, O my Jesus, with which to love Thee as I ought !

Would that I could unite my affections with those of Thy adopted Father, so full of humility and reverence !

Would that I had a place among the shepherds to whom the angels notified Thy birth, so as to take part in their simple and fervent adoration !

Would that I could enter into the company of the kings and lay down at Thy feet the gold

of my charity, the incense of my adoration, the myrrh of my penance !

O beloved Child ! drive me not away. Allow me at least to envy the lot of the poor, dumb beasts that warmed Thee by their breath; and, even if it is small indeed, deign to unite the humble love of my poor heart with Thy infinite love.

IV.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN— THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS

And after the days of her purification were accomplished they carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord; and to offer a sacrifice as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And Simeon took the Child into his arms and blessed God, and said, 'My eyes have seen Thy salvation.' And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother: 'Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.'

St. Luke ii., 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35.

AND PRESENTLY THE Lord, whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire shall come to the temple. Behold He cometh, saith the Lord of Hosts' (Malachy iii). Holy souls did truly desire His coming. They anxiously waited for that event and seriously desired it. And they filled the ages with their plaintive invocations. In the mystery now under our consideration these true Israelites are represented by an old man, just and fearing God,

who looked for the consolation of Israel, for the Holy Spirit had promised him in sleep that he would not die before he saw the 'Christ of the Lord'; also by a venerable and holy widow who, although old, was less burdened with years than with austerities. Simeon, taking in his arms the Child of heavenly promise, chanted his canticle of eternal farewell to the world in the beautiful words recited every day in the office of the Church: 'Now thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace, O Lord! for my eyes have seen Thy salvation' (St. Luke ii.). Anna, the prophetess, in an ecstasy of joy on seeing Him whom she had invoked in her prayers day and night, 'hastened to publish His glory everywhere and to tell of His coming to those who looked for the redemption of Israel.'

These just souls are holding high festival, yet nothing extraordinary is seen in the temple; to other eyes it is only a poor infant that is brought to be presented to God according to the law of Moses. But this Infant accomplishes an admirable substitution that can only be comprehended by true Israelites. To all appearance He is ransomed according to law; but in reality He immolates Himself instead of the insufficient victims of the law. 'Holocausts for sin were not pleasing in Thy sight; then said I: Behold I come.'

Let us carefully consider this mystery. The labours and fatigues, the sweat, the humiliations, the opprobrium, the sufferings and wounds, the blood and death of Jesus Christ are all laid at the feet of God in this presentation. All is offered and accepted; it is a sacrifice of propitiation and salvation. Mary takes part in this sacrifice. The sword of sorrow which will one day consummate her anguish has a prototype in the sad prophecy addressed to her to-day: 'Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.' But will not all humanity, or at least the chosen people of God, profit by this offering of Jesus? Alas, no! The divine Child will meet with a thousand contradictions, and along with those who will rise to glory by virtue of His sacrifices we shall see many, who will despise it, eternally lost. 'Behold this Child is set for the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted.'

Let us aspire to be of those included in the resurrection; and, as Christ offers Himself for us, let us also offer ourselves through Him to His Father. It is only infinite perfection that can fill the void of our unworthiness and of our insufficiency. The victims of the old law, permeated with our intentions and our faults through the imposition of human and guilty hands, represented our guilty lives. Therefore God

rejected them. He will reject us also if we dare present ourselves to Him alone; but in company with His well-beloved Son He can refuse us nothing.

Receive, then, O my God! from our unworthy hands this unspotted Host that gives Himself to us; this living religious worship which unites heaven with earth in the union of the divine and human natures.

Thrice blessed Majesty of God ! I cannot offer anything proportionate to the greatness of Thy being out of my nothingness. The benedictions of all humanity, the universal canticle of praise taken up by all creatures, would be far too little for Thy glory; but we adore Thee with Jesus, and through Him, and in Him.

Unbounded goodness of God ! neither our acts of thanksgiving nor the joyful transports of a world filled with Thy gifts can perfectly respond to Thy infinite benefits; but with whatever spiritual or temporal good there is in us we thank Thee with Jesus, through Jesus, and in Jesus.

Terrible justice of God ! Thou wilt not be appeased by the sacrifice of our poor, sin-stained life. A hetacomb of all nature could not restore Thee the honour that sin has taken from Thee; but we implore pardon with Jesus and through Him, and in Him.

Author of all good ! Thou hast anticipated us in the effusion of Thy gifts. But how can we hope to secure a continuance of these, except with Jesus, and through Him, and in Him ?

O heavenly Father ! we present to Thee Thy only-begotten and well-beloved Son the object of Thy eternal complacency. We hide ourselves in His heart; we present ourselves with Him in the arms of Mary to be immolated to Thy glory, if it is Thy good pleasure. Take all that we have—our mind, our heart, our body, our thoughts, affections, and desires, our life itself—and declare to us that our sacrifice is agreeable to Thee, so that we may joyfully sing with the holy old man, Simeon: ‘*Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine.*’

V.

THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE— JESUS MASTER

And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And He went down with Mary and Joseph and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And Mary His mother kept all these words in her heart.

St. Luke ii., 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

THE LAW WAS fulfilled by the presentation in the temple, Jesus offered Himself to His divine Father in the name and in favour of humanity; and now He enters into the humble

and obscure dwelling of Nazareth, where He increases in years and in strength, and is filled with wisdom, 'for the grace of God is in Him.'

Twelve years of silence and obscurity pass quickly by, after which we find Him, when it was supposed He was lost in the excitement of a great festival, among the doctors of the law, hearing them and asking them questions.

O marvel ! These men, who have grown grey in study and in learning, who almost know the number of letters contained in the Sacred Writings, who scrutinize the mysteries and reduce to a nicety the interpretation of the law—these wise men of Israel, whose grave and learned word had the greatest weight in the land, have found their Master. They have found him in a child of twelve years ! Their humbled pride is astonished at the profundity of His teaching and at the wisdom of His answers. It was the first wound it received, and its sting will continue to rankle in their hearts until the time of His public preaching shall have come. The people simply give away to ecstasies of admiration : 'And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers' (Luke ii., 47).

Dear and adorable Child ! I know who Thou art. Divine Word, infinite Wisdom, Thou art come from the 'mouth of the most high God.'

In God Thou hadst subsisted before the birth of time, and in Him Thou wilt subsist when time shall be no more. Hear His inspired word in the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs : 'When He prepared the heavens I was present; when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths; when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters; when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits; when He balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with Him, forming all things, and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times : playing in the world; and my delights were to be with the children of men.' Thou knowest, O Lord ! all secrets, even the most profound secrets of the Divinity. What thou hast revealed to men is no more than a drop from the ocean of Thy infinite knowledge. The Sacred Scriptures, full of Thee, have been written by Thy inspiration. Who, then, can so well explain them as Thyself ? Therefore, I am not astonished that questions and answers should fall from Thy lips which confounded the learned doctors of the law. I wonder not, but rather cry out in my simple ignorance, with the prophet Isaias: 'Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people, for a leader and a master to the gentiles' (chap. lv. 4).

Speak, O Master ! speak. It is Thy right and Thy function. Is it not right, and even necessary, that Thou shouldst be 'engaged in the business of Thy Father,' Who, by Thy teaching, has deigned to instruct us in the mysteries of eternity ?

Speak, O Jesus ! to the great and powerful, too often surfeited with empty grandeur; speak to the worldly-wise of our day, whose proud reason too often vanishes in the delirium of folly; speak to the worldly-prudent, who, in their presumption, pretend to have no other rule of life than common honesty. Show them that nothing is truly great which does not lead up to a participation in the divine Sonship; that human science must submit itself to the science of heaven; that the wisdom of the world, from the moment it refuses to enter upon the heroic way of Christian virtue, is supremest folly.

Speak to the poor, the ignorant, the humble, to raise them from their abject state; teach them the mysteries which no human reason can fathom; and conduct them by humble and despised pathways to the dwelling-place of life eternal.

Speak to me, O my Jesus ! I listen to Thee, and I wish to receive no other promises than Thine, no doctrine but Thine, no law but Thine. For me it is not necessary to behold Thee with the eyes of the flesh to submit to Thy teaching.

It is enough for me to read Thy books in which Thy words are engraven; to hear the Church, the guardian of Thy truth and of Thy commandments; to feel within me the mysterious attractions of Thy holy grace.

O adorable Jesus ! speak to me especially by Thy grace. Speak to my mind and to my heart. Let my thoughts, desires, affections, discourses, and acts be regulated by Thy internal word. Speak to me as Thou didst in the temple, with the sweetness and amiability of a child; but if my obdurate heart refuses to be moved by Thy loving words, speak to me with authority and with the just severity of an offended Master. Press, insist, rebuke, reproach, threaten, disturb, and torment me. I am prepared to submit to Thy rigours. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

VI.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN—THE ANGUISH OF JESUS

And going out He went to the Mount of Olives. And when He was come into the Garden of Gethsemane He said to His disciples, 'Pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' And He withdrew from them a stone's cast, and kneeling down He prayed: 'Father, not My will but Thine be done.' And being in an agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground.

St. Luke, xxii., 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

LET US HUMBLY ask our Blessed Saviour to admit us among the chosen disciples who followed Him to Gethsemane. There, casting

off sleep, let us enter into the grotto in which Jesus is prostrate, and contemplate His Agony. What a sad and sorrowful spectacle ! The human nature of our Saviour, till then calm and serene, is disturbed, saddened, and afraid at the approach of death; yet death is not for that nature a surprise. For a long time its cruel necessity, the hour in which it would take place, its many mournful circumstances were well known to Him. Then His humanity was not troubled; but now at the supreme moment the storm breaks more relentless and more dreadful than upon any other nature. Whence comes this awful change? From a secret weakness long held under the mask of a hypocritical peace? Blasphemy! Every circumstance in the agony of our dear Master is a prodigy. The exercise of His omnipotence was necessary to open the door of His holy soul to grief at all; and, again, His omnipotence was needed to prevent His death in His unspeakable anguish. It was because He willed it that passions hitherto submissive were agitated and troubled. It was His divine foreknowledge that placed clearly before Him the living and frightful images of death and sin. It brought before Him in one appalling vision all the evils He was about to endure—the treason of His disciples, the abandonment of those whom He loved, the sacrilegious hatred of the Jewish priests, the

injustice of the great, the ingratitude of the people, the despair of His friends, the anguish of His beloved Mother; the insults, injuries, humiliations; the spittle, the scourging, the crown of thorns; the cross and, at last, His death as the most infamous of malefactors. And all these evils for sinners who had loaded past ages with their iniquities! Sins of the mind, of the heart, of the senses; the abominations of idolatry, injustices, violences, debaucheries of pagan races; the prevarications and apostasies of His own people—Jesus saw it all. But the future weighed more heavily upon His dismayed soul than the past. His precious blood would be shed for millions to no purpose; they would ungratefully refuse His grace and would reject His merits.

‘And He began to fear and to be sad’ (Mark xiv.). Jesus is seized with a mysterious sadness. His sacrifice seems to be repugnant to Him, and He implores God to spare His life, threatened with so much ingratitude and profanation. We read it in the twenty-ninth Psalm, in which David had already spoken in His name: ‘What profit is there in my blood whilst I go down to corruption?’ Why shed it if, in a great measure, it is sure to be lost?

‘Jesus begins to fear.’ His spirit and His flesh, so tenderly and so purely united, protest against the horrors of a cruel and unmerited separation.

'His soul is sorrowful, even unto death.' He falls with His face to the ground; a sweat of blood flows upon it; He is in an agony. He would certainly have expired if He had not been sustained for the bitter death of the cross by divine power.

Oh, what a conflict! Human nature, left for a moment to itself, repels the too bitter chalice which God presents to it. 'O my Father! if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.' But His human nature is promptly lifted up by the divine nature and abandons itself to the most holy will of its heavenly Father in the words: 'Not My will but Thine be done.'

O most sweet and blessed Jesus! I am not scandalized in Thy agony and dereliction; rather do I see, under the doleful veil of this mystery, Thy sacred divinity, and I offer to it the homage of my faith and adoration. Prostrate in spirit before Thee in the grotto of Gethsemane, I tenderly pity Thee in Thy awful sorrows, and I beg the grace to take part in them. Have I not merited them by my innumerable faults? Is it not to me that this disgust with a sinful life, this fear of the terrors of divine justice, this sadness unto death, properly belong? Be just and severe, O my Jesus! Give me strength to suffer with Thee! How bitter soever Thy chalice may be, grant me grace to submit to

it, and accept it as Thou didst accept the holy will of God.

VII.

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR—THE BLOOD OF JESUS

And Pilate said to them the third time: 'I find no cause of death in Him. I will chastise Him therefore, and let Him go.' But they cried out: 'Crucify Him, crucify Him.' Then, therefore, Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And Barabbas (who was a murderer) he released, but Jesus he delivered up to be crucified.

St. Luke xxiii., 22 ; St. John xix., 1.

IN THE sixteenth chapter of the book of Job we find words which admirably prefigure the awful scourging of our Lord: 'He hath gathered together his fury against me, and threatening he hath gnashed with his teeth upon me; my enemy hath beheld me with terrible eyes. They have opened their mouths upon me; and, reproaching, they have struck me on the cheek. They are filled with my pains.'

Having fallen into the hands of His enemies, having been judged and condemned, Jesus is delivered up to a troop of malefactors, the vilest and most cruel of whom act the part of executioners in the pretorian court. They seize their victim violently and bind Him fast to a pillar at which He is to be scourged. They arm themselves with rods and thongs, and strike Him with all their

strength without counting their blows. The sacred body of our Saviour shudders. In the midst of the hissing of the scourges His deep moans and sad, low cries are heard. The fierce butchers, already drunk with wine, are infuriated at the sight of His blood.

They yield to fatigue, but the awful work is not yet finished. Still more! Still more! is the cry that is heard. Some bring knotty brambles bristling with thorns, others bring iron-mounted thongs. These frightful cruelties last nearly an hour, a part of the people gloating over their victim, a part of them buried in stupor. Not to have expired under this treatment required the strength of God. Jesus can no longer stand erect. His body is one red, gushing wound. His eyes, almost closed with tears and blood, see only His executioners; yet so sweet and mild are they that they would soften a savage beast. But under control of the passion of hatred man is more savage than any beast. So much love on the part of our dear Saviour only irritated His enemies all the more. At last, when He had received five thousand strokes, as it has been revealed to His Saints, Jesus is untied from the pillar and falls covered with blood.

What hast Thou done, O sweet Lamb ! to bring upon Thyself this fearful barbarity ? Thou hast

selected these people from among the gentile nations; Thou hast delivered them from the slavery of Egypt. Through a thousand dangers Thou hast brought them into the land of benediction. To them and to us all Thou hast promised the blessed liberty of the children of God. Is it for this Thy beneficent hands are torn and bruised? Is it for this Thou art tied, like a rebellious slave or a vile malefactor, to a pillar?

Thou hast consoled the just and holy men of Israel, 'the men of desires,' who, inclining their hearts and souls to the future, looked for the coming of God's envoy. Thou didst go about doing good, and Thou hast stretched out Thy loving hand to solace all human infirmities. Thou hast cured the paralytic and the lame; Thou hast given hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, life to the dead. Is it for this Thy sacred body has been beaten until it became one bleeding wound? Thou hast brought down manna from heaven like the dew of the morning, and from the hard rock Thou hast brought pure water to relieve Thy people about to die of thirst in the desert. Thou hast multiplied a few loaves in another desert to feed the famished multitude that followed Thee. Thou hast allowed a torrent of heavenly doctrine to flow from Thy lips. Thou hast opened for our souls fountains of living water,

the divine virtue of which will make it reach to the abodes of eternal life. Is it for this Thy flesh was torn and Thy blood shed ?

O my dear Saviour! Thou didst merit nothing but our tender respect and loving gratitude; but I hear the prophet Isaias say (liii.): 'He was wounded for our iniquities; He was bruised for our sins.' And how truly has his word been realized in Thee !

Nothing could be more just than that our sinful flesh should be tied to a pillar and beaten to death; but, even if our blood were drawn drop by drop until no more remained, of what value would it be as long as it was impure and sinful? But there must needs be blood, for I hear the Apostle of the Gentiles say in his Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Almost all things, according to the law, are cleansed with blood; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission' (chap. ix.).

Adorable Jesus, Thou hast fulfilled this austere law, and the lashes of Thy executioners, more effectual and more salutary than the rod of Moses, have opened, in Thy flesh, wounds through which the stream of salvation flows.

Flow on, flow on, O adorable stream of my Saviour's blood! I cast myself into this sacred fountain. Penetrate me and wash me, not only from all impurity and weakness of the flesh, but

from all weakness and languor of soul. Go to the root of my imperfections and spiritual miseries. Wash away and bear far from me sin and the principles of sin.

VIII.

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS—THE IGNOMINY OF JESUS

Then the soldiers of Pilate the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, and stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him they mocked Him saying: 'Hail King of the Jews.' And, spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His head. St. Matt. xxvii., 27, 28, 29, 30.

GO FORTH, daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon, in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart' (Cant. iii.).

This King Solomon means my Saviour. The Church, His Spouse, invites us to go with her and contemplate the strange and unheard-of diadem with which the synagogue, His cruel and relentless stepmother, crowns our Holy Saviour.

Those who were employed to scourge Him are now glutted with blood; the soldiers lying listlessly around wish to amuse themselves. 'Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus in the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band'

(Matt. xxvii. 27). A broken column and a shaky stool are found. They will answer for a throne. Our dear Saviour is stripped of His garments a second time. An old scarlet mantle is thrown upon His shoulders; this is His royal purple. A reed is put into His right hand; this is His sceptre. Now, O my Saviour, be seated! Thou art about to be crowned!

The soldiers have obtained three thorny branches, which, with diabolical art, they twist together in the form of a crown, bristling on the inside with a hundred sharp points. These ruffians, assuming a solemn air and simulating a grave ceremony, place this newly-invented crown on the head of Jesus. It will not keep its place at first, but they force it to remain by the blows of a piece of wood. The thorns pierce His head on all sides, and His eyes are almost destroyed. All the veins of the head are pierced; blood flows like water from this newly-opened source. Jesus now loses the power of sight; He is a prey to burning fever; He is devoured by extreme thirst, and He shudders with pain and anguish. Nothing more frightful can be conceived, but it is mere sport for His tormentors. One after another they come before Him, bending the knee in mockery, saluting Him with the words, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they throw down the throne and its

Occupant, and again put Him on it with brutal violence. All this lasts at least half an hour, and is applauded by the full cohort which surrounds the pretorium. Then our dear Saviour is brought to Pilate, who presents Him to the people with the words: 'Behold the Man!'

Yes, behold the Man! No longer the glorious being whom the Father presented to a world just fresh from His creating hand, saying to it: 'Be ruled by him, be his subject.' Behold now Man such as sin has made him! The ignominy of our Lord is a living and a horrible image of the ignominy of the sinner. How wretched indeed the sinner is! He thinks that it will increase his power, or at least his independence, to throw off the yoke of the divine will and to follow no longer any but his own. Soon he becomes a marvel of shame and misery.

Behold the Man! Jesus is despoiled of His clothing and covered with a ragged purple garment. The sinner is stripped of the white robe of innocence. Grace, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the reflection of the glory of God in his soul, all disappear at the very instant in which he becomes a sinner. Only the tattered remnants of a dishonoured nature are left to him.

Behold the Man! Jesus is crowned with thorns, the sharp points of which pierce and torture His

adorable head. The sinner is wild with joy in his transgression. His joy comes quickly and flies away again like the lightning. The enjoyment of past iniquity soon becomes nothing more than the sharp thorn of disgrace and remorse.

Behold the Man ! Jesus is forced to take into His hand a reed for a sceptre; it is a mock sceptre, an insult to His omnipotence. The sinner holds over his passions only a power enfeebled by the consent he has given to sin. His reason, deprived of the supernatural vigour derived from grace, no longer knows how to rule the appetites. It is no longer the rigid sceptre to which obedience is given; it is now but a reed that bends with the least resistance.

Behold the Man ! Jesus has his hands tied and is led without effort from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate. The sinner has forfeited his liberty, for 'he that commits sin is become the slave of sin!' (John viii. 34).

Behold the Man! Jesus is the sport of a troop of soldiers, who deride Him, buffet Him, treat Him as a fool, and mock Him in His miserable state. The sinner, when his eyes are opened, will see around him a troop of devils well pleased with their triumph, laughing at the misfortune of their victim and feasting on their victory with atrocious joy. For a long time they had looked for his fall,

which they effected by their wiles. Their hour is come; they hold fast this proud soul that wished to be its own master. It is become in their hands a mock-king, whilst it listens only to their flatteries and is invisibly saturated with their outrages.

What ignominy! O my God! Behold what sin has made of man.

O humbled yet blessed Saviour! I bring to Thy feet this miserable soul, which at length confesses its disgrace. I bring it confused, repentant, wounded not merely by cruel remorse, but also by the salutary thorns of contrition. Have pity on it. Touch it with one drop of that precious blood which flowed from Thy adorable head. It comes to Thee to be transformed, to be invested with glory and honour; a master again, and possessed of the blessed liberty of the children of God. Seeing it restored the angels will cry out in joy: 'Behold the Man.'

IX.

THE CARRIAGE OF THE CROSS—JESUS FALLS UNDER THE CROSS

And they took Jesus, and led Him forth. And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, and there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning to them said: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' St. John xix., 16 & 17; St. Luke xxiii., 27, 28.

NOTHING IN THE Passion of our Saviour can possibly resemble ordinary sufferings;

all His ignominies, all His pains are beyond the common description of punishments or of executions. He was scourged as no one had ever before been scourged; no one before Him had been insultingly and barbarously crowned with thorns; and now He is brought to the place of His execution in a manner different from all others.

The custom of the age required slaves to carry the gibbet of a condemned person to the place prepared for it. But figures and prophecies had proclaimed in advance the additional and special tortures reserved for Him. Abraham had placed the wood of the sacrifice on the shoulders of his son Isaac; Jesus, the new Isaac, is made to bear His cross to the hill of sacrifice. The prophet Isaias had seen Him in this state of humiliation and suffering when he cried out: 'The government is on His shoulder'—*Principatus super humerum ejus* (ix. 6).

Wherefore Jesus, having heard His sentence, is brought to the middle of the forum. His cross is there. He prostrates Himself to take it upon Him; He embraces it as if it were a long-wished-for spouse. The trumpet is heard; the officers cry out: 'Move on!' Jesus rises. On the right and on the left the people stare at Him.

With naked and bloody feet our dear Saviour, stooping low, tottering on His limbs torn with

wounds exhausted by a long fast and by the loss of blood advances or rather creeps to Calvary. Officers in front of Him are dragging Him along; others are pushing Him forward. He cannot make one firm step. Loaded as He is and not being able to advance as they desire those who follow Him ever press Him on and thus He falls several times with His face to the ground and the cross falls with Him. The executioners raise Him with imprecations and kick Him as they would the meanest animal. It is the most frightful spectacle to be imagined. O Christian soul; veil not your face; look on. Move forward along with Him. Follow your Saviour piously on the sorrowful way to Calvary. Content not yourself with weeping like the holy women who will not leave Him; but gather up and carefully guard in a humble and contrite heart the deep lessons He gives you. The burden of the cross is after all less heavy to Him than the immense weight of our sins. It is really under this weight He falls to teach us what a heavy load to carry is a sinful life. If we do not take steps to throw it from our souls as soon as we feel its weight it will drag us down and cast us into an abyss. Vain thoughts frivolous desires culpable levities appear to us as nothing; yet how often are they the cause of shameful falls! Jesus falls several

times on His way to Calvary. Herein He gives for our benefit a sign of our sad weakness. This man weakened, bruised, pushed forward, thrown down by soldiers and spectators, is a symbol of ourselves. The infirmities of nature and the tribulations of life cast us down; the passions make us feel in our souls their terrible sting; the demon tempts and torments us; the world multiplies its seductions around us; yet we go on in our course without serious attention to the dangers that beset us and without any safeguard as if there was no danger to our virtue. Our Saviour says to us: 'Take care, take care for the strong have fallen'!

He fell in the dolorous way, but He quickly rose again, notwithstanding His bruises and wounds, to show us that we too, when thrown down by the enemy of our salvation, ought to rise quickly again. To make no effort to gain our feet, not to call anyone to our assistance, to make known to no one our great misfortune, would be the part of sloth and pride. And then the evil one whose hatred rejoices in our falls endeavours to persuade us that it is better to wait. Of what use is it to rise? We are still so very weak we shall fall again. Later in life when age shall have fortified our reason, when the passions, growing cold, no longer make such pressing demands, when we shall have been satiated to disgust with pleasures the

attraction to which has hastened our fall, then it will be time to say, 'Rise, go on!'

Oh! how foolish. Who has promised that death will not come and find us in our sin, or that the inveteracy of evil habits will leave us any power at all to repent? No, no! Away with cowardly sloth, away with presumptuous delays! Then all the rest will follow.

But can we repent now? Are not our repeated falls an evidence of ingratitude which has exhausted the divine mercy? Here is another temptation of the evil spirit against which the infinite goodness of our Saviour protests, as well as the 'plentiful redemption' we shall find in His blood. 'With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption' (Psalm cxxix.). He came to save sinners; He will not break the reed bent down by the tempest. He wishes to receive us to His mercy, and to pardon all our sins each time we go to Him with an honest and sincere heart. Arise, then, poor sinner, arise! It is Jesus invites you. It is possible you may fall again, notwithstanding all your good resolutions. But remain not for a moment prostrate; always beg the grace of God to give you true penance until the supreme moment comes when God's last pardon shall be the answer to your last act, an act of contrition.

X.

THE CRUCIFIXION—THE DEATH OF JESUS

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there; and the robbers, the one on His right hand and the other on His left. And there was this title written over him: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' and gave up the ghost. And behold the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the Saints that had slept arose, and appeared to many. And there was darkness over all the earth from the sixth till the ninth hour.

St. Luke, xxiii., 33; St. Matt. xxvii., 45.

WEAKENED ALMOST TO death by wounds, exhausted by a most painful journey, crushed and bruised under the weight of His cross, Jesus reaches the summit of Calvary. Let us concentrate our thoughts upon this last and most awful scene of His Passion.

The executioners seize upon our dear Saviour and roughly drag off His garments, now adhering to the wounds made in His scourging. They stretch Him upon the cross and violently lay hold of His bruised and torn members, driving rough nails into His hands and feet. The breaking and disjuncting of His bones is distinctly heard. Oh! how horrible. Finally the cross is set upright and the Victim is exposed to the view of a degraded and immoral crowd, gathered from all parts of Jerusalem, to feast on the spectacle of His agony

and to insult Him in His expiring pains at a time when the suffering of the most infamous criminal would command pity and make of him an object sacred to respect and compassion.

But the sweet Lamb of God forgets all injuries and all cruelties. He pardons His murderers, promises paradise to the repentant thief, gives His Mother to us to be our Mother for evermore, thirsts for souls and invites them to Him. He submits to the divine will, and fulfils the prophetic oracles until all is consummated. He lovingly complains that He is abandoned by the Father, commends His soul to Him, utters a loud cry, and expires.

Jesus is dead! But He has not yet poured out upon us all the treasures of His love. His Sacred Heart is pierced by a lance, which brings with it blood and water to give living virtue to the sacraments and to regenerate sinful souls.

Jesus is dead! Let us contemplate His body all livid and covered with blood. To our carnal eyes it is without beauty or glory; but His Father joyfully turns to Him; He clasps the Victim of sin in a loving embrace, and gathers into His merciful bosom all the merits and sufferings of that divine Victim. He is the well-beloved of whom Solomon sang; He is the well-beloved, clothed in the white robe of innocence and in the purple of sacrifice:

'My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands' (Cant. v. 10).

Jesus is dead! Let us unite ourselves with the invisible angels who surround the cross and adore in silence His lifeless flesh. The soul of which it was the unspotted tabernacle has left it to visit the sombre prison in which the just souls of the old law awaited His coming; but His divinity is still there, preparing in those dead members the triumph of the resurrection.

Jesus is dead! Let us weep with his Most Holy Mother, and beg of Her to obtain for us a portion, at least, of Her tender and profound compassion. All the dolours of Her Son are felt in Her maternal Heart. Her tears are a reproach to our guilty hearts, yet she desires nothing so anxiously as our pardon. O Queen of Martyrs! O Mother of God and of men! we will cling for ever to the memory of Thy great mercy. That we may continually bring it to mind, imprint deeply in our souls the wounds of Thy crucified Love :

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Holy Mother, pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

Jesus is dead! Let us lament with Magdalen, and with the centurion strike our breasts; our sins

indeed have crucified our Saviour. Come forward now, all ye impieties, blasphemies, ingrati- tudes, sacrileges, proud thoughts, tumultuous ambitions, egotism, injustices, lies, deceit, pleasures of sense, shameful indulgences—come to the mangled body of your Saviour and be confounded. ‘Of a truth you have murdered the Author of life.’ O my Jesus! I am ashamed to appear before Thee; I fear the fate of Thy executioners; I would fly far away from Calvary, the scene of my infamy, if I were not kept there by Thy merciful words and by Thy promises of pardon.

Jesus is dead! Let us forget all else, and give our hearts without reserve to the contemplation of the holy Cross, as if we were alone in the world with it. It is for us, for each one of us He was crucified. For us, in this sense: that He is our substitute on that frightful gibbet, on which, but for Him, we should have received the strokes of God’s justice; for us, in the sense that He has expiated our faults and accomplished the work of our salvation. To Jesus crucified be ever given the homage, too long withheld, of our heartfelt repentance! To Jesus crucified be ever given the homage of our deepest gratitude for the greatest of all benefits—that of our redemption!

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES**XI.*****THE RESURRECTION—THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS***

And when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, bringing sweet spices to the sepulchre that they might anoint Jesus. And behold an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and rolled back the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre and was sitting on the right side. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And he said: 'Fear not; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen, He is not here. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him as He told you.' St. Matt. xxviii., 1, 2, 3, 5; St. Mark xvi., 6 & 7.

JESUS, HAVING BEEN taken from the cross, is placed in a new sepulchre in which His flesh, fearfully mangled by the ordeal through which it had passed, reposed for a little while. Its rest is not the deep sleep which weighs down human beings after they breathe their last sigh, and from which only the trumpet of the angel will awaken them; it is a tranquil slumber from which the voice of God will soon arouse Him.

Two passions—hatred and fear—watch round His tomb. It is covered with a huge stone and secured by the seal of the synagogue. The soldiers are on guard to prevent any secret approach. It is confidently believed that these precautions will stifle for ever in the tomb the voice of Him who had said of His body: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again' (John ii., 19).

How ridiculous and foolish men make themselves when they attempt to run counter to the designs of God or to give the lie to His promises! On the morning of the third day there is an earthquake; an angel descends and rolls away the stone; and the flesh of Jesus, receiving life again by the divine power, springs forth, glorious and immortal, from the arms of Death.

Let us adore our risen Saviour! No longer is He a prisoner whom the soldiers of the synagogue and the pretorium drag about from one tribunal to another; no longer is He the Man forsaken by His Father and His friends, and complaining most touchingly of the rigours of divine justice; no more is He the condemned Man whom all insult who dare address Him; no longer is He the Man covered with wounds and become like a leper whose aspect is fearful to look upon; nor is He any more the dead body which His afflicted Mother enshrouded with reverent hands and saw laid in a sepulchre. Now He is free, joyous, triumphant, radiant, immortal. Let us, with the Psalmist, sing to the Lord: 'Thou hast broken my bonds, and I will offer to Thee a sacrifice of praise.' Thou hast not forgotten the Just One in His tomb, 'nor hast Thou allowed Thy Holy One to see corruption.' With St. Paul we will cry out: 'O death! where is thy victory? O death! where is

thy sting?' (1 Cor. xv.). 'Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall have no more dominion over Him; for in that He liveth, He liveth in God' (Rom. vi.). Let us sing these canticles of joy and then turn our thoughts upon ourselves.

This great mystery includes for us a lesson, a figure, and a promise.

The ineffable joy and glory of the Resurrection have been purchased at the price of most horrible sufferings. It was inevitable. It is our Saviour Himself who tells it to those who, like the disciples of Emmaus, might be scandalized or weakened on account of His Passion: 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to have entered into His glory?' (Luke xxiv.). Now, the road of soldiers must be the same as that travelled by their leader. Enlisted under the banner of Jesus Christ, we cannot hope to attain the incorruptible glory and unalloyed happiness, promised by Almighty God, through the broad pathway of pleasure and enjoyment, which is unhappily too much frequented. Jesus did not take that road. It was the rough way of sorrow and pain, in which we can easily trace His bloody footsteps, that conducted Him to eternal honours. It was the cross He bore and on which He died that opened the gates of heaven, barred and bolted against the luxury of

worldlings. The motto of every Christian ought to be: 'Let me suffer, O Lord, in this life, that I may live eternally in the next.'

This is the lesson of the Resurrection.

There is in it also a symbol or figure. The mystery of the Resurrection is a lively figure of the spiritual transformation which ought to take place in each of us. Sin is death. It is the tomb in which the captive soul sleeps a fatal sleep. The enemy takes all manner of precautions to prevent its awakening. Yet he cannot prevent the voice of God from reaching even this sepulchre of the sinful soul. 'Arise,' says that voice, 'thou who sleepest; arise from the dead. Christ will enlighten thee' (Ephes. v.). At the first sound of that voice let us rise from sin. We may never hear it more. Death long continued will breed corruption.

But how shall I rise? How break the cords that tie me down? How roll away the heavy stone that is laid over me? How break the inveterate habits and the shameful laxity of the will, which is weakened so much by its many consents to sin? Courage, Christian! In the figure just given there is a promise. For us Christ died, and 'for our justification He rose again.' The divine virtue of His glorified humanity will one day bring together the scattered dust of our bodies, and will make our flesh, dissolved in death, live again eternally

incorrupt; but at present He addresses Himself to the soul especially to draw it from sin to justice, and to give it strength to 'walk in the pathway of a blessed newness of life.'

I count on Thee, O my adorable Master! Have pity on me! I am dead, or at least I feel myself dying day by day; for it is not life to languish thus in tepidity. In virtue of Thy blessed Resurrection enable me to rise from the tomb of my failings. Create, O Lord, a new spirit within me, so that, penetrated with Thy light, disengaged from the influences of the flesh, active and alert in good works, and bent upon the perfection of my life, I may live henceforth only for Thee, as Thou livest only for God.

XII.

THE ASCENSION—JESUS IN HEAVEN

Now whilst they were speaking these things, Jesus stood in the midst of them, and said to them: 'Peace be to you; it is I, fear not.' And He showed them His hands and feet. . . . And He led them out as far as Bethania: and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass whilst He blessed them He was carried up to Heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of God.

St. Luke xxiv., 36, 50; St. Mark xvi., 19.

LET US GO to Mount Olivet. Thither Jesus brings His disciples for the last time. He recalls to their minds their divine mission, confirms the powers conferred upon them, again

promises the Holy Spirit, gives them His blessing, bids them adieu, and rises towards heaven. The hearts of the apostles, divided between grief and wonder, follow with their eyes their adorable Master, who is leaving them, and whom they will never see again on earth. A bright cloud intercepts their view of the triumphant humanity of their Saviour, but they continue to look towards the heavens whither He had ascended. Now they understand all; and their hearts, so recently gross and carnal, break all earthly chains.

Let us with them raise our hearts to heaven. *Sursum corda* ! If Jesus leaves us. He does not forget us, nor does He abandon us to our exile without hope. His going is not to put an immense distance between His glory and our misery ; it is to prepare a place for us: 'I go to prepare a place for you' (John xiv. 2). This is His promise; can we suppose He will not keep it ?

O Jesus, our only love! we have need of hearing this good word fall from Thy adorable lips to console us in Thy absence. Thou goest to prepare a place for us; is this world, therefore, not our most suitable home? Ah! no. It is too full of troubles to give that joy to the heart to which it aspires; it is too narrow to satiate the immensity of our desires; it is too uncertain to give us any assurance of eternal possession, the idea of which is

inseparable from all our dreams of happiness. The eternal life of God, His infinite perfections, the perfect love of God, the boundless space which His immensity fills—this is the ‘length and breadth and depth’ of which St. Paul speaks; this is the place to which we should direct our course and in which we should anchor our bark of life, the place which Jesus went to prepare for us.

He is there indeed. It is our humanity that triumphs in His person and sits at the right hand of God. Even if we were not called to a participation in His glory and beatitude we ought to be anxious to know where it is and to register His victory in our human records. If He belongs to God, He belongs to us also; if He is of the divine substance He is also of our flesh and blood; and we may well declare with a holy doctor, ‘Where a part of me reigns, I believe I reign also; where my flesh is glorified, I am glorified; where my blood is king, I too am king.’

But listen, Christian! Jesus does not wish to reduce you to the sterile honour of knowing His triumph. By His ascension He enters into the bosom of God the Father, not as delegate, but as a precursor of humanity. This is the expression of St. Paul in his sixth chapter to the Hebrews.

The precursor prepares the way for those who follow him, and the place in which they are to rest

after the fatigue of the journey. The precursor puts all things in order; he waits for His friends and calls them in. But how much more certain and efficacious his office is when, instead of being a servant merely, he is master of those for whom he prepares a place, and master of the place as well !

Christ, our precursor, is all this. Let us consider carefully the words of the apostle. He teaches us that Christ asserted our rights by His very presence in the bosom of God. For we are His property, and He has a right to enter into heaven with what belongs to Him. 'He is our head; we are the body and members of that head.' But where the head is, there likewise ought to be the body and the members. But Jesus would not be fully our precursor if, by His action, He did not put us in a condition to realise our rights—that is to say, if He did not prepare God to receive us and did not prepare us to take possession of God.

He is our priest 'forever'; or, in other words, He presents eternally to God the most sacred gifts that humanity has to offer, and to humanity the most sacred gifts of God. Our acts of religion would never have penetrated this sanctuary, in which they ought to mark out a place for us, if they did not pass through the hands of Jesus Christ. And if we return to God after our transgression, our repentance is only acceptable because 'we have

an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Just.' If the groans of our misery or the expressions of our love are heard in heaven, it is because Jesus appropriates them; for 'He lives only to intercede for us.' He shows to the Father the marks of His glorious wounds, and makes His blood plead more strongly than that of Abel.

O God! Thou canst not resist this strong cry. It must be that Thou permittest us to mark our places in the sacred tabernacles which Thou fillest with Thy blessedness. This is the will of my Lord Jesus; and in preparing Thee to receive us He prepares us to take possession of Thee. The incarnate Word, humbled and annihilated in the days of His life on earth, became on the day of His ascension the inexhaustible treasury of the gifts of God. 'Christ, ascending on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men' (Ephes. iv. 8). Thus it is that the remedies of our faults, the succour of our weakness, the light of our darkness, the solace of our pains, the impulses towards good, all descend into our souls to make them worthy of God, whom we are to possess. He extends His benign influence even to our corruptible flesh, which He prepares for the resurrection.

O Christian! meditate upon this glorious and consoling mystery. Never more turn to creatures

as the end of your life. This world is not your resting-place. Honours, riches, pleasures, human affections are unworthy of a great and generous soul. Look to your Leader and Precursor; have confidence in His divine ministry; abandon yourself to His holy grace; raise your heart to heaven. *Sursum corda!*

XIII.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST—THE SPIRIT OF JESUS

And when the days of Pentecost were ended, they were all together in one place: And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.

Acts ii., 1, 2, 3, 4.

THE APOSTLES WERE assembled together in one place, awaiting in recollection and prayer the effect of the promises of Jesus. For he had said: 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself; that where I am you also may be. . . And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete (comforter or advocate), that He may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him; but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you and be with you'

(John xiv. 3, 16, 17). Ten days after the Ascension of our Lord a mighty event took place. It was the fulfilment of the promise, and is thus recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: 'And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues as if it were of fire, and it sat upon each one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak' (Acts ii.).

O wonderful prodigy! But a moment ago these men were ignorant and could not clearly understand the doctrine of their Master; now they possess a full knowledge of the most sublime truths. At one moment they express themselves in a weak and stammering manner; the next they are filled with a marvellous eloquence. At one moment they are weak and timid even to the extent of cowardice—they hide themselves, so as not to be involved in the misfortunes of their Master; the next they come forth boldly, and fearlessly proclaim their faith and love; and this, too, before a people who load them with injuries and drag them before their tribunals. They seem at one moment ungrateful and almost without hope; the next they are devoted to the words of

their Master, even unto death. Now they are sad and downcast; all at once their hearts abound in hope and joy. What has happened? The Holy Ghost, having descended from heaven, has brought to perfection in the souls of the disciples the spirit and form of the Christian life, which hitherto had been only in a rudimentary state. This is His special mission. The Holy Fathers have sometimes called Him the 'perfecting force'.

Learn from this, O Christian soul! that the effusion of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for your salvation as is the application of the blood and merits of Jesus Christ.

'The end of man, which is to see God and possess Him eternally, is beyond the powers of nature,' says St. Thomas of Aquin; 'our reason cannot conduct us to it, if its natural movement does not bring to its aid the instinct and motion of the Spirit of God.' It is so necessary for us that without it we possess only the rudiments of the Christian and supernatural life.

Jesus, the divine Architect, makes of our souls His temples, having purified them with His precious blood. It is the Holy Ghost who consecrates us by marking us with His character, and conferring upon us the unction of His love and the illumination of His gifts. Pentecost is therefore, in the Church, a universal and perpetual

festival. Our baptism is a pentecost; our confirmation is a pentecost. Besides this, as St. Thomas teaches, the divine Paraclete returns constantly in His secret visits, to illuminate, strengthen, and beautify with His gifts the souls of the just.

But let us hear attentively the word of God: 'The Lord does not come in times of disturbance' (3 Kings xix.). We must have peace in our souls; we must remove the agitation of vain thoughts and of vain desires, if we would receive the Spirit of God. Let us await His coming, like the Apostles, in recollection and prayer.

It is not likely that God will surprise us by sudden visits of His light and grace; in the ordinary workings of His providence He only sends His Holy Spirit to us when we say with earnest fervour: Come! *Veni Sancte Spiritus!*

Let us invoke Him, then, in the dark night of temptation, in the agony of doubt. When, enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and drawn on by the glare of creatures, our uncertain spirit asks for the truth to guide it; and when, desirous of the knowledge and light of faith, we seek to penetrate the divine mysteries, let us invoke the Holy Spirit, for He is indeed the 'Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.'

When we are moved to determine and fix our

vocation in life, when we are about to perform some work in which our consciences are deeply concerned, or if it is our duty to direct souls in the ways of God, let us invoke the 'Spirit of counsel.'

When we feel the love of God languish in our hearts, or when we are moved by a holy zeal and wish to love God more, let us invoke the Holy Spirit, for He is truly the 'Spirit of piety'.

When the power of evil attacks us and the world persecutes us, when passion torments us, and when sorrow oppresses us, let us earnestly call Him to our assistance, for He is the 'Spirit of fortitude.'

When the abyss of sin is open before us and ready to engulf us, let us invoke Him with all our strength, for He is the 'Spirit of the fear of the Lord.'

In all our sufferings let us invoke Him, for He is indeed the Paraclete—the Comforter.

Against the slavery of all evil habits that weigh down the will let us invoke Him, for 'where the Spirit of God is, there is true liberty.'

XIV.

*THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—JESUS
AT THE TOMB OF HIS MOTHER*

Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved? Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array? Cant. viii., 5 ; vi., 9.

The holy Mother of God is exalted above the choirs of Angels. Mary is assumed into Heaven. The Angels rejoice, and in their hymns of praise bless God for the fruits of man's redemption.

MARY LANGUISHED, waiting anxiously many years for the blessed day that would re-unite her with her Son. It came at length. Her lamp of life was peacefully extinguished in the home of the beloved disciple, St. John, surrounded by the apostles, whose messages she bore to heaven. A virgin sepulchre received the mortal remains of the spotless Virgin. It was the mysterious cradle soon to be visited by the Author of life. Sleep on, dear Blessed Mother, sleep on, whilst the infant Church mourn around thy grave !

Soon one of the disciples desired to see again his Mother's face, and to kiss the blessed hand that had caressed the Saviour of the world. The tomb was opened, but the immaculate body was not there; instead of it were found roses and lilies of the sweetest perfume—a fitting symbol of her perfections and virtues.

Thus a miracle is performed in the silent shade of the tomb. Jesus, from the highest heavens

contemplating the spotless body which was the tabernacle of His humanity, repeated the words of the prophet: 'Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption.' He applies it to His holy Mother; He will not suffer her to feel the corruption of the grave. Mary slumbers in death, as her Son once did, but He awakes her with these loving words of the Canticles: 'Arise, make haste my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. The winter is now past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land; the time of pruning is come; the voice of the turtle is heard. The fig-tree has put forth her green figs; the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come. . . . Come from Libanus, where the incorruptible cedars grow. Come and be crowned'.*

Mary can neither rise nor ascend to heaven of her own power, but the Author of life extends to her His omnipotent force, places His angels at her service, and they bear her to her home in heaven.

To us poor mortals the privilege of incorruption in the tomb does not belong. Wretched children of Adam, defiled, from the first moment of our existence, by original sin, unfaithful to the grace of our regeneration, frequently guilty of sin after

* Antiphon of the Assumption.

having been pardoned, we have opened to death all the avenues of life. Death entered with sin and has written on our flesh this terrible word: Corruption! Nothing escapes its cruel tooth. The skin, gradually eaten away, soon disappears entirely, leaving only a dry skeleton; and this, too, silently crumbling into dust, is mingled with the surrounding earth by the grave-digger's spade when he is preparing a place for other dead bodies. This is the end of all.

Let us not be terrified, however, at our nothingness. Men may seek for us in vain; but the all-seeing eye of God follows through the mazes of nature the wanderings of the particles which once composed our bodies. When the world shall have finished its course, the Author of life will visit the empire of death, and with His sovereign voice will address the elements of which human bodies were once constituted, saying: 'Unite, arise, come.' Then the bones of each human being shall be recomposed, and the flesh shall recover the texture and colour by which it was once before known. This is a certain truth.

And it is no less certain that our resurrection will be the same as our death. It will be glorious or ignominious, it will be for eternal joy or eternal sorrow, according as our death shall have been in justice or sin.

If to-day we hear the forebodings of death, if we are saddened by our infirmities, if our thoughts are gloomy and dark, if the perfection of our souls is retarded or burdened with the weight of our bodies, let us not repine. Patience! Patience! One day this poor companion of the soul will rise immortal, incorruptible, brighter than the stars of heaven, obedient to the commands of the soul which will impart to it a wonderful agility. If the body presses us with its earthly needs, and even incites us to sin, we must inexorably repress it. We must preserve ourselves from all defilement by wise precautions, strong resolutions, and salutary chastisements. The more we resemble in the flesh the unsullied flesh of our Holy Mother, the more resplendent will be the glory of our resurrection.

XV.

THE CORONATION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN— JESUS THE REMUNERATOR

And the temple of God was open in Heaven, and the ark of His testament was seen in His temple. And a great sign appeared in heaven : a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

Apocalypse xi., 19, xii., 1.

HEAVEN IS OPENED. Our Most Holy Mother, invited by her Son, triumphantly enters in. 'Come and be crowned,' our Saviour says to her. Let us assist in spirit at this coronation. It is the eternal consecration of all the virtues, of all the dolours of Mary. It is the recompense which

confers upon her the greatest power ever before imparted to a creature. All the kings of Juda gather round their well-beloved daughter. 'David dances for joy; the angels and archangels unite with Israel's sweet singer to chant the praises of their Queen. The virtues proclaim her glory; the principalities, powers, and dominations exult with joy; the thrones felicitate her who was the living and immaculate throne of the Most High. The cherubim salute her in a canticle of praise, and the seraphim declare her glory,' said St. John Damascene. Finally Jesus comes, and, amid the plaudits of the whole Court of Heaven, places a crown on the brow of His Most Blessed Mother.

Jesus forgets nothing. All is crowned in Mary: her thoughts, her desires, her actions, her virtues, her merits—even her privileges, of which she had rendered herself most worthy by her constant correspondence with the admirable designs of God. The feast of the Coronation is a feast of justice.

Christian soul, this feast of justice ought to rejoice your heart! It is your Mother who is honoured, it is your Mother's triumph; and her triumph teaches us that we have a just God in Heaven, who, when the day of remuneration comes, will remember all. Therefore what signify the difficulties, sorrows, languors, and tribulations of our short lives? 'For the rest there is laid up for

us a crown of justice which the Lord, the just judge, will bestow upon us in that day' (2 Tim. iv.).

O senseless souls who run after earthly goods, can you say this of the world you seem to adore or of the rulers of the world? They promise riches, pleasures, celebrity, love. Your whole soul is held in a state of tension by the toys of imagination, covetous desires, or other passions; your senses themselves are disturbed, your health is injured, your life is filled with intrigues, troubles, and meannesses. Humble yourselves, throw away earthly cares, else you will never be able to say, with the noble and fervent confidence of the true Christian: 'There is laid up for me a crown.' Crowns of gold or of roses, of honour or affection, often slip from your grasp just when you think you hold them most securely. And if you were able to obtain at once all the crowns of the world, you must bring them at last before the 'just Judge', who will, with pitiless hand, tear them from your brow and throw them down to rot where you received them. We cannot carry with us to heaven useless or hurtful ornaments. Our crown in heaven—our true crown—will remain eternally on our brow and will never fade. 'And when the prince of pastors shall appear you shall receive a never fading crown of glory' (1 Peter v. 4).

Feed yourself then, O my soul! on these deep and consoling thoughts. The all-just Rewarder of

all faithful souls sees you and knows you. Despise the vain objects of worldlings and cling to the road that brings you to a crown of glory. It is a rough and difficult road. You will have to overcome obstacles, to leap over more than one abyss, to avoid ambuscades, to fight the enemy, to repair reverses and even defeats. Courage! Courage! All your marches, all your efforts, all your labours and combats are in God's keeping: 'For the rest there is laid up for you a crown.' You will say: 'If I could only march alone on the hard road leading to glory! But no! I must carry along with me this miserable body. It is a source of sin, and of sorrow, too. It obscures my sight so that I cannot see clearly what I ought to see; from it comes doubts, scruples, dryness, disquietude, chagrin, and anguish. From time and from nature it receives many blows and wounds. How many are the evils, both external and internal, of our sad lives!' Courage! Courage! All these are counted; all will be crowned. At once a champion, a pilgrim, and a martyr, you will be able to say with the great Apostle of the Gentiles: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me at that day; and not to me only, but to them also who love His coming' (2 Tim. iv., 7, 8).

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